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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 29, 2018

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**Baker-Polito Administration Announces Grant to Address Youth
Violence in Haverhill**

City becomes 13th community in MA to join Safe and Successful Youth Initiative

HAVERHILL – The Baker-Polito Administration has awarded a two-year, \$682,486 grant to Haverhill to prevent and address youth violence. Haverhill is one of 13 cities across the Commonwealth to join the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI), led by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), to identify youth who are at high-risk of being involved in a violent crime and offers the opportunity for individuals to redirect their lives through educational, behavioral health, and employment services.

"Our administration is pleased to partner with the City of Haverhill through the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative to help expose young people to potentially life-changing educational and occupational opportunities," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "These funds, combined with important effort from the local police department and outreach workers, will make lasting and meaningful impacts in the lives of local kids, while keeping them away from violence."

"Youth violence is a significant public health and safety issue that can have lasting harmful effects on victims and their family, friends, and communities," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "Youth violence is preventable, and today we're one step closer to our goal of eliminating youth violence before it starts."

SSYI is a youth violence prevention and intervention initiative that operates in cities

with the highest juvenile crime rates across Massachusetts. SSYI targets young men, ages 17-24, that local police have identified as most likely to be a victim or perpetrator of a violent weapons offense. Each client is paired with a direct outreach worker with the goal of engaging them in services. Once youth agree to enroll, they are matched with a case manager that connects them with local education programs, occupational training and employment services, and behavioral health services for individuals who have experienced trauma or struggle with substance use disorder.

“We are working collaboratively across the Commonwealth to address youth violence as a public health issue and implement strategies that address the underlying behavioral health needs of youth in crisis,” **said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders**. “SSYI is an important tool we are using as part of a broader strategy by the Baker-Polito Administration to address youth violence in our communities.”

Youth violence is the third leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Massachusetts data suggest that despite recent progress, violence continues to be an issue for many young people. The [2015 Health and Risk Behaviors of Massachusetts Youth Survey](#) found 13% of high school students reported having carried a weapon in the previous 30 days, 4% were threatened or injured with a weapon at school over the past year, 19% were involved in a fight in the past year, and 8% reported gang involvement. Sixteen percent of students reported being victims of bullying and nearly one in ten students were physically hurt by someone they were dating.

“Since I was a part of UTEC’s civic engagement program Teens Leading the Way, when I was in high school, I’ve been pushing for UTEC to expand to Haverhill,” **said Representative Andy X. Vargas**. “Today is a monumental day—we’re living up to our commitment to focus our efforts on the next generation by bringing a nationally recognized model to our city. We’re excited to see better outcomes for Haverhill’s youth through SSYI. We’re grateful for Lieutenant Governor Polito’s commitment to keeping our municipalities safe and for the Baker-Polito Administration’s commitment to ensuring success of young people across the Commonwealth.”

Over 1,200 youth are involved with the program each year. Since taking office, the Administration has allocated a total of \$23.8 million for cities to implement SSYI. In addition to Haverhill, SSYI operates in Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Springfield, and Worcester. From April 2017 to December 2017:

- 1258 youth were identified as being at high-risk;
- 529 youth received case management services;

- 244 youth received education services;
- 285 youth participated in training and employment activities; and
- 239 youth were engaged in behavioral health services.

“The UTEC program has been incredibly successful in Lowell, and we look forward to them coming to Haverhill and finding a building in our city where young people can be trained for jobs and counseled,” **said Mayor James J. Fiorentini**. “A successful anti-gang program must involve more than police. It requires a multifaceted effort that involves working to give young people alternatives to gangs, and provides them with opportunities to not join gangs, or leave them if they are in a gang.”

“We are so appreciative of the Baker-Polito Administration's critical support for Haverhill and for UTEC to work alongside so many leaders and community partners,” **said UTEC Chief Executive Officer Gregg Croteau**. “SSYI funding helps us all create pathways for young adults who face the largest challenges, while emphasizing that violence must never be normalized.”

SSYI youth are among the most difficult populations to engage in services, and community partnerships are critical to getting youth the help they need. To promote collaboration across the public health and public safety sectors, each SSYI program is comprised of a police department; a lead agency which coordinates all activities, reporting and operations; and a Licensed Mental Health Clinic that provides behavioral health treatment to clients. SSYI programs also partner with local crime prevention and intervention efforts in order to maximize opportunities available to youth.

In February, the Administration [announced](#) \$5.65 million in competitive grant funds to communities and local partners to bolster their efforts to combat gang violence. The awards were made to 15 sites across 27 cities and 12 research partners through the Shannon Community Safety Initiative, which targets gang violence in the Commonwealth. The Baker-Polito Administration has awarded more than \$26 million to prevent and address violence in the Commonwealth through the Shannon Community Safety Initiative since 2015.

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